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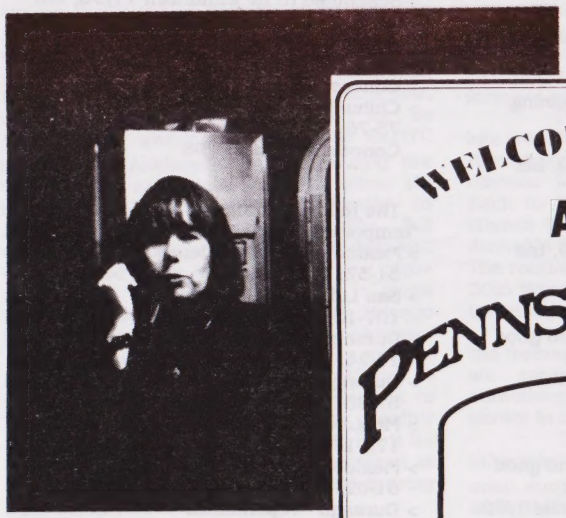

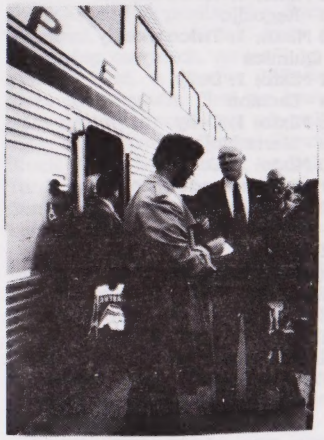

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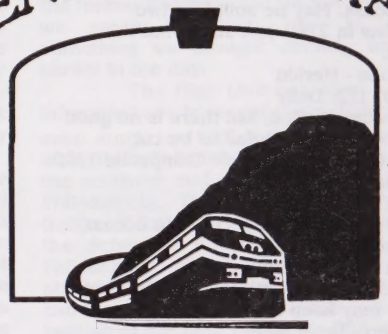

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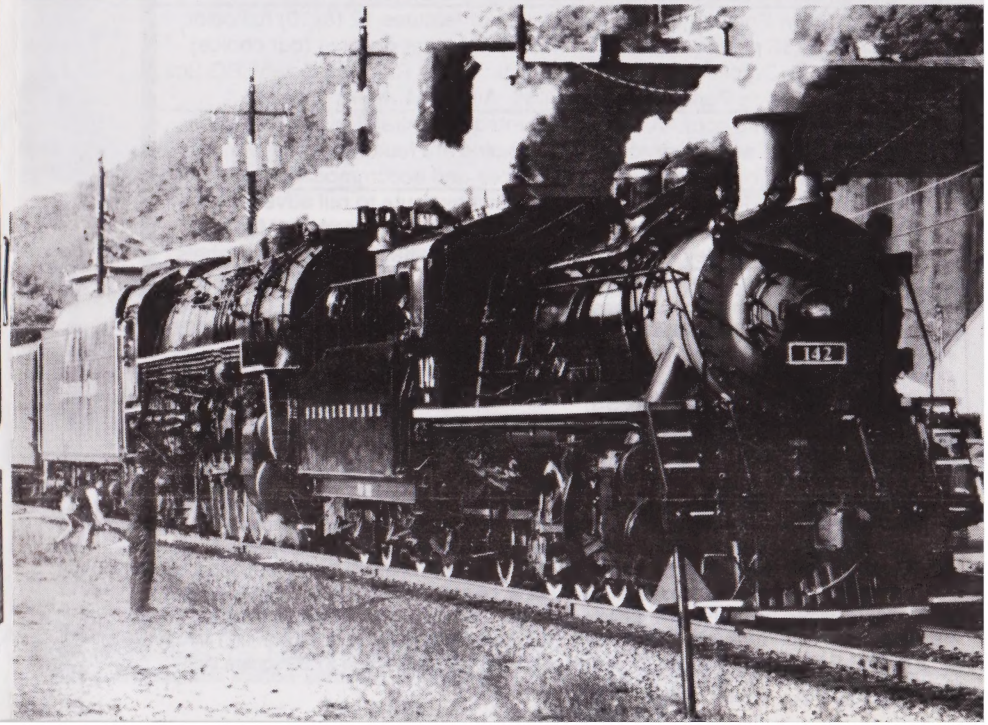
RAIL TRAVEL NEWS



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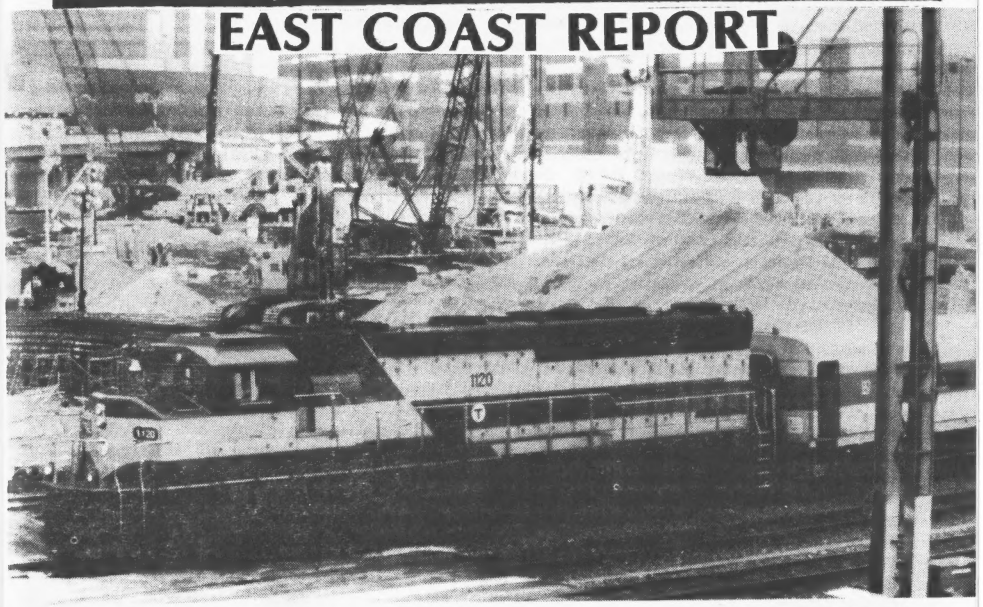
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.
Vol. 27, no.14. Whole no. 593, November 20, 1998. Copyright © 1998 by Message Media. Address all mail to Message Media, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription rate $26 per year to US & possessions. To other countries $35 per year. Single copy $1.25.
STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Editors-at-Large: Glenn Lee & Paul Rayton. Regional Correspondents: Peter Bretz, Jack Ferry, Adron Hall, Kenneth Maylath, Peter Roehm. RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.50/line of 80 spaces. Display ads $1.50/square inch.

ON THE COVER

Front cover: The Chinese-built steam engine #142 and C&O 614 double-head in photo runbys at Port Jervis NY on Oct 17. In the upper right photo, the 142 drifts back westward after helping the 614 up the grade through Black Rock cut. The photos are from a mainline steam excursion reported on by Bill Hakkarinen in East Coast Report below. Photos by Bill Hakkarinen.

Rear cover: Images from the inaugural run of the extended *Pennsylvanian* reported on in this issue by Gene Poon. Top, Jill Kowal, Amtrak Chicago Service Manager for the Eastern Business Group, announces the departure of the first *Pennsylvanian* from Chicago on Nov 7. Bottom, a reporter interviews James Betts, chairman of the Ohio State Rail Development Commission, alongside the inaugural *Pennsylvanian* at Cleveland on Nov 7. Photos by Gene Poon. At right, design of an inaugural poster carried aboard the inaugural train.

EAST COAST REPORT



"Big Dig" sand piles are a backdrop for an MBTA commuter train behind GP40MC unit no. 120 in Boston on June 23. Photo by Bill Hakkarinen.

During the week ended Nov 7, Amtrak reached a milestone in its electrification project with the installation of the last catenary footing. Still to go are installation of some 4000 more poles, stringing of catenary and other wire and related hardware.

SEPTA issues new timetables effective Nov 8. The R1 Airport Line cover has a photo of two different Silverliners. Both R2 timetables, the R8 and the combined city timetable covers have a front shot of Silverliner #394, as do the R3 West Trenton and the R5 Lansdale/Doylestown. The R3 Media/Elwyn, R5 Paoli/Downingtown and R7 Trenton-Chestnut Hill East sport a photo of AEM7 #2307. The R6 Norristown-Cynwyd sports a two-photo cover. The bottom photo is a track view of Manyunk station platform, while the top photo shows a station with order board semaphore blades taken before electrification.

Midday trains on this R6 line are subject to delays due to installation of welded rail between Miquon and North Broad stations. The major rehab project on the Manyunk Viaduct and Manyunk station has been pretty much completed. With this, the *Schuylkill Flyer* returns, as is proudly noted on the bottom of the front cover under the two photos. This train, inbound from Elm St at 7am and outbound from 30th St at 5:09 pm is the only named train on the SEPTA system.

An advisory in all timetables notes that Sunday service operates on Thanksgiv-

ing and New Year's Days, while special schedules will be operated on Christmas.

A special note in the R7 Trenton timetable regarding NJ Transit connections calls attention to possible changes to NJT train times in February when the new Hamilton station between Trenton and Princeton Jct is expected to open.

On Friday, Oct 23 I was in NY, and at Penn Station I was able to pick up copies of all the new timetables for NJT except for the Atlantic City Line. These I later got at NJT customer services in Newark.

During the weekend of Oct 3-4, the new Hunter connection was cut in and Raritan Valley Line trains departed or terminated at Cranford, with passengers bused between Cranford, Roselle Park and Newark. The new timetable shows trains running between Newark and Roselle Park and Cranford two minutes faster.

Another MidTown Direct morning train has been added to relieve crowding on the Morristown Line. Train 6610 departs Dover at 6:14am and runs local to Summit, where it departs at 6:47. From there it runs nonstop to NY Penn Station, arriving at 7:23 am. This train is sandwiched between the 5:59am and 6:27am "regular" MidTown Direct departures from Dover.

On the North Jersey Coast Line, the first weekday departure from Bay Head, at 4:49am, which used to terminate at Long Branch, requiring a train change at 5:25am, now runs through to Newark, thus allowing passengers to sleep. Arrival in Newark is 6:23am instead of 6:35. And by changing trains at Newark, NY arrival is still 6:54am.

On the NE Corridor, the 6:05am train from Trenton, with a connection from SEPTA, now runs with electric equipment (it formerly was diesel to Newark); thus passengers get a through ride to NY Penn and arrive 10mins sooner to boot.

In the Atlantic City timetable, weekend train 4601 leaves Philadelphia at 12:50 am, but in the timetable it's marked "pm" in error. We know it's really "am" from its placement and because it's a daily train, correctly listed in the weekday listings.

Metro-North also came out with new timetables, and track gate fence-mounted racks had ample supplies of them for the Harlem and Hudson Lines, but New Haven Line timetables appeared to be cleaned out. This was at 10:30am on Friday, Oct 23. I did find out rack that had *three* New Haven timetables.

The Harlem Line has had more trains added on Saturdays between North While Plains and Grand Central, providing half-hourly service most of the day.

The New Haven Line timetable cover states "major service improvements". Among them are a new 9:30am weekday train departing New Haven to Grand Central. There was formerly a large gap between the 8:50 and 10:50am departures. A train leaving Grand Central at 2:34pm, which arrives in New Haven at 4:15, is the connection for a Shore Line East train departing at 4:20. This train formerly left New Haven at 4:15. This is the only SLE schedule change.

Also, an additional train runs from Grand Central through to New Canaan. On weekends several holiday shopper trains between New Haven and Grand Central and Stamford and Grand Central have been added.

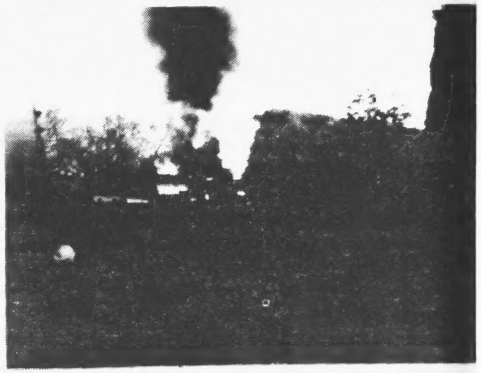
News we don't like to report comes from Shore Line East. Ridership has slipped somewhat. So far this year, the average weekday ridership is 1120. In 1996 it was 1213. This is probably due to service disruptions, delays and missed connections to Metro-North in New Haven due to the ongoing electrification project. Of course, the lack of support from Gov. Rowland does not help either. Twice in the past he has called for elimination of this service.—Bob Underwood.

●●●

2-8-2 Plus 4-8-4 Equals Mainline Steam!

By Bill Hakkarinen

For the third year in a row, Ross Rowland's big 4-8-4 Northern, Chesapeake & Ohio 614, has been delighting rail aficionados as well as the general public with its exciting runs across northern New Jersey and southern New York. The trips have run in all weather through beautiful fall scenery. At times, 614 needed diesel assistance, but for the most part the trips went smoothly, and the big engine easily handled the long trains. What a surprise then on Oct 17 when Susquehanna Railroad 2-8-2 #142 showed up at Port Jervis to help! No. 142 is the little Chinese-built Mikado that is making friends all over the East.



Double-heading up to Otisville Tunnel through brilliant autumn foliage. Photo by the author. See page 10 for more photos.

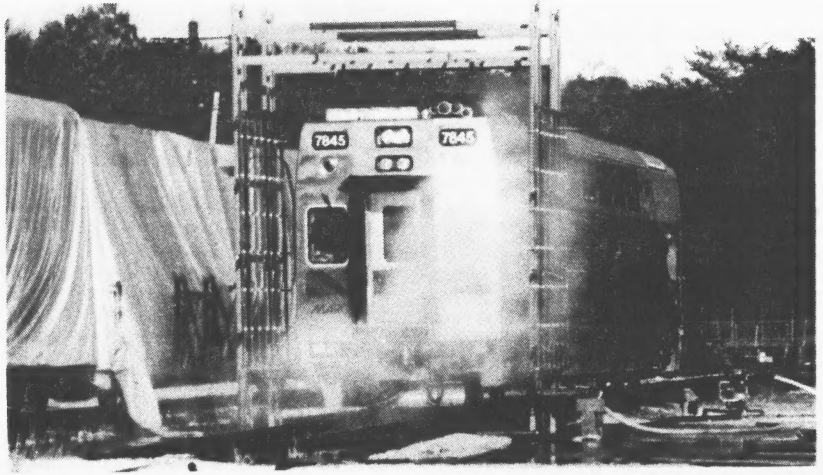
There had been some advance publicity, and numerous rail buffs turned out, both at Port Jervis and along the way. Trains riders at the photo line across from the former Erie Station might find out that the fellow next to them had driven hours to the site. No. 142 would double-head the train up to Otisville Tunnel, with crowds sure to follow at each curve and overpass.

The Mikado was waiting patiently on a new track off the turntable as 614 was moved into position. After turning, the locomotives were coupled to begin the big show. However, there was heavy traffic today on the former Erie main line. Two frieghts, as well as the arrival of a Metro-North passenger train, added to the rail scene. Finally, all was ready.

The paired steamers made two thrilling runby's past the assembled crowds, whistles screaming. Dogs howled and children covered their ears. At the conclusion, train riders scrambled back aboard. The run up the grade through Black Rock cut, around Rundle's Curve, and through Shin Hollow to the tunnel would be a second highlight to the double-header show.

Fans filled the overpass and lined the right-of-way as the two steam locomotives presented a mainline steam drama of smoke and sound. Their barking exhausts echoed off rocks and ridges. It was a thrilling sight and sound show.

East of the tunnel, 142 cut off the train near CP Howells, and 614 was again on its own. The run back to Hoboken was fast and smooth. While 614 had a helper up the trade, it was a most welcome one—a helper engine that made Mainline Steam the sum of 2-8-2 plus 4-8-4!



A new MARC bi-level coach gets a wash at the Martin Rail Car facility. Car 7845 seen here is a cab control car, but had not yet entered revenue service when it was photographed by Bill Hakkarinen on Nov 24.

Connecticut DOT wants to widen I-95 between Branford and the Rhode Island border, spending $750 million to add one more lane. (More than the federal Amtrak subsidy for one year for the entire rail system!) Branford Sen. Aniskovich liked the proposal, but New Haven Mayor DeStefano questioned whether widening highways is an adequate solution, pointing to the Shoreline East system as an example of what the state should be pursuing.

The Altoona PA Railroaders Memorial Museum's patronage has dropped sharply since late Oct, when train schedules changed. New schedules make it hard to arrange a one-day tour to the museum, and Amtrak also has changed its allotment of seats for short-haul travel. Tours are part bus and part train. Asked why the tours did not use the train all the way, the museum's assistant director said "Once you've ridden a train for about an hour, the novelty wears off. You've used up most of the fun." But Jenny's Custom Tours of Bedford PA said "You could just bring them in on the bus, but everybody wants to do the train."

Some odd equipment was used in the Corridor during the Thanksgiving rush, to find enough seats for travelers. Empire Service train 257 on Nov 27 used ex-Shore Line East SPV2000 cars, with an Amcafe for food service. Numerous trains had SEPTA Bombardier coaches only. Some used MARC coaches with cafe cars for food service. One Clocker on Nov 25 consisted entirely of Amcafes and Amdinettes, with no coaches. Backup power assigned to the Empire Service was all P32s, and apparently no FL-9s. (FL-9s 485 & 486 are still stored and serviceable, but sufficient P32ACDM units (700

class) are available for use as reserve power while the FL-9s may be retired soon. Two Amtrak FL-9s were recently sent to northern Maine after a deal to lease them to a Cape Cod tourist line fell through.)

Preliminary design studies, costing $3.6 million, of a Hudson River tunnel to handle burgeoning rail commuter traffic, were authorized by the Port Authority of NY & NJ, MTA and NJ Transit in late Nov. The project would also link Penn and Grand Central Stations, now connected only by roundabout routes far to the north of Manhattan.

Virginia Railway Express estimates that it could schedule as many as three daily non-commuter round trips between Washington, DC and Manassas, VA. as Old Town Manassas becomes a major tourist attraction. VRE officials also may help Manassas with a new parking lot, to replace one being eliminated by the Candy Factory development project. Manassas predicts that the city will need more parking spaces than it currently has, once increased tourism comes to Old Town. VRE could add the three trains as early as mid-1999.

SEPTA has completed a feasibility study of extending the Route 100 rail line to the King of Prussia mall and Port Kennedy. That line now runs from 69th St in Upper Darby to Norristown. The new line would branch off from Route 100, the Norristown High Speed Line, beyond the Hughes Park station, is seen as part of a bigger plan to connect Philadelphia and Reading with a proposed Schuylkill Valley Metro train line.

The Washington Metro wants to be the first US transit agency to experiment with a plastic electronic farecard that will record fares by being passed in front of a sensor. Metro will try out 60,000 of the cards, charging a customer $5 to obtain one. Fare payment could then be placed on the card via a fare machine.

RAIL CANADA

With crews donated by Canadian Pacific Railway, West Coast Express (Vancouver, BC) will run two special Santa Claus trains, on Saturdays, Dec 12 & 19. The trains will leave Mission at 10am, and arrive Vancouver at 11am. Return trips depart Vancouver at 5pm, arriving at Mission at 613pm. Trains will make all intermediate stops. Everyone who donates a new, unwrapped toy will ride free.

Bombardier announced Nov 24 that its third-quarter earnings had jumped 28 percent due to growth in its transportation and aerospace business. Its transportation division, which makes rail equipment in Europe and North America, earned $31.6 million Canadian compared to $18.5 million last year.

Toronto Globe & Mail, in a recent, surprisingly upbeat article entitled "Via Rail at a crossroads", quoted new VIA president and CEO Rod Morrison as saying "I dream in bed at night about all sorts of different ideas" (for VIA). Transport Minister David Collenette, a self-described rail buff, the paper said, and Morrison seem to agree that involvement of the private sector in Canadian passenger trains will be their salvation.

The same paper's transportation reporter, Joseph Hall, wrote Nov 6 that the Toronto transit system is still the best in North America.

MORE WEST COAST NEWS

A bizarre bus crash in Seattle Nov 27 saw an articulated diesel Metro bus plunge off the Aurora bridge and land at the edge of an apartment house. The bus driver and one passenger died. Another passenger reportedly had shot the driver and then shot himself to death. About 35 people were aboard, and 19 of them were injured.

The voters of all four cities—San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley & Emeryville—on whose ballots the advisory measure appeared Nov 3 soundly approved the idea of leaving room on the Bay Bridge rebuild for a rail commuter line. Marin and Sonoma County voters defeated sales tax increases to pay for a light rail operation on NWP rails.

The *San Joaquins* will become all-reserved trains Feb 28. The official announcement is due on Jan 15.

San Francisco finds itself with a $145 million surplus due to a good economy, and Mayor Brown plans to increase Muni funding. Residents have become disenchanted with the Mayor, largely because he has not fulfilled his promise to "fix Muni".

The BNSF plans to move all its dispatching in California west of Needles to San Bernardino on Mar 31.

Santa Barbara CA station is being refurbished, and having its lead paint removed. A parking lot is taking shape. A Nov 15 report noted much rail-rebuilding activity taking place. The platform was expected to be completed by the holidays. UP's project this fall is rail upgrading Moorpark-Goleta.

News in this issue is updated through Dec 1. Contributors to this issue included Alan Feinstein, Glenn Lee, Gene Poon, Ray Saunders and Rocky Shay.

MIDWEST REPORT

Chicago photo: Bill Hakkarinen.

At 640am on Dec 1 in Villa Park IL a Metra West Line commuter train arrived on time. William Lamb, 56, who normally rides the commuter train, was late, and ran up as the train was leaving. Not wanting to wait, he grabbed a handrail and rode on the outside, intending to jump off at Elmhurst, the next station. He was unable to hold on, and fell off three miles down the line, while the train was going about 50mph. Lamb, who is in fair condition with various injuries, faces charges of illegal trespassing, according to local city police.

A five-alarm fire swept through the former administration building of the Pullman works in South Chicago the night of Dec 1. The historic clock tower was destroyed. The building was to have become the Chicago Transportation Museum.

The former offices have been vacant for years, even while the adjacent factory building was used by Morrison-Knudsen and Amerail to build Amtrak Viewliner sleeping cars and commuter equipment.

A drunken transient found wandering in the building by firefighters admitted setting the fire. He is being held for investigation.

CSX celebrated completion of its double-track project from the Chicago area to Greenwich OH with a "Golden Spike" ceremony at Portage IN on Nov 20. Pounding in the "last spike" symbolically connected CSX and Conrail. The ceremony features CSX and Conrail locomotives as a backdrop.

●●●

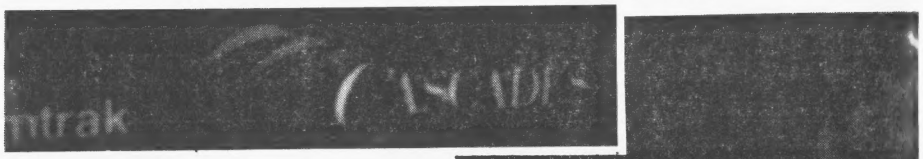
Due to track work, midday locals on the South Shore have been terminating at Dune Park and Beverly Shores, with passengers bused between these points 9:30 am-2pm weekdays. The project should conclude during November.

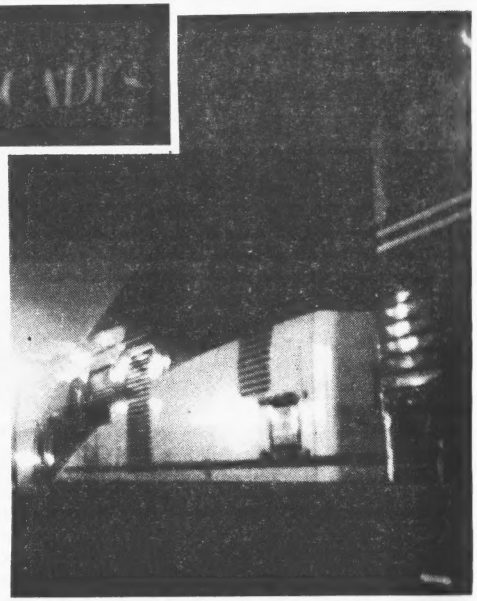
Some of Metra's most neglected stations are on the former IC South Chicago branch, which serves black neighborhoods. On October 20 Metra and local politicians held a ceremonial groundbreaking for a $2.6 million renovation of the South Shore station (not to be confused with the railroad of the same name, this station is not served by CSS&SB) at 71st and Yates. The existing 1922 wooden building, used by about 450 daily riders, will be replaced with a new concrete platform, canopy and shelters. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D.-Ill.), who lives nearby, secured federal funding for the project. Jackson said in his speech on this occasion that the Transportation Equity Act included $2.2 million for a new station at 93rd Street and $1.8 million to upgrade the 87th Street station.

More transit ideas for the car-choked Schaumburg, Ill. area were aired October 21 by consulting firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, hired by local governments to study the matter. The consultants concluded that widening the Northwest Tollway (I-90) "is going to be needed, no matter what," but offered these rail concepts: reroute UP Northwest Line service via WC and Metra Milwaukee between Deval Tower, Tower B-12 and Western Avenue to serve O'Hare Airport; a new commuter rail line between Arlington Heights/Palatine, Schaumburg and Itasca/-Wood Dale via current Ill. Hwy 53 and I-290 (exact route not determined); and a light rail line from O'Hare terminals to Schaumburg. The study committee will select eight options for further work in 1999.—Mike Blaszak.

A Metra North Central line train on Nov 24 was struck by a car whose driver was trying to reach the Tri-State Tollway by crossing the Wisconsin Central-owned tracks where there is no grade crossing. The car caught fire and damaged the locomotive slightly.

WEST COAST REPORT





The first of four new Talgo trainsets for the Pacific Northwest's *Cascades* service was dedicated in Seattle on Nov 9. Each set is named for a mountain. The first was the "Mt. Rainier", while the others will be Mts. Hood, Baker and Olympus.

Described as suggesting a 1950s auto with tail fins, the new cars have a very different appearance than the Talgos first seen in the US. Each end car—two for each trainset—have swept-up sheet metal at the ends that make a visual transition from the low-slung car to the taller locomotive to be used on each end of the train. The sweep is accented by a broad paint stripe that continues to the base of the car. The car colors are dark green, cream and dark copper, with colors separated by narrow white stripes.

The first set, including new F59 locomotive 467, was sent eastward after dedication, for FRA testing. It returned to Seattle on the rear of the northbound *Coast Starlight* of Nov 22. RTN photographed that train (1.5 hrs late) at Emeryville that night. The photo at top shows the *Cascades* logo on car sides, while the larger photo is of an end car coupled to a Superliner. Note that the sheet metal sweeps up to match the height of the Superliner.

The consist of the first trainset is: baggage 7101 (with fins), coaches 7405, 7406, 7407, 7408 and 7409 (with 36 seats each in 2+2 seating), handicapped coach 7501 (24 seats?), Bistro car 7301, diner 7801 (30 seats, 4+2), handicapped Custom Club coach 7551 (19 seats, 2+1), Custom Club coach 7451 (26 seats, 2+2), and 7901 parlor car with fins. In Seattle now is "cab-bage" car 90252, built from F40 252, which will be a cab control car for these trains.

The service is receiving five new F59 units (similar to the "California" engines used on that state's short-distance service), numbered 466-470.

An inaugural press run for the service was scheduled for Nov 30. Originally, revenue service was to begin Dec 1, but in late Nov that was postponed to an indefinite date later in Dec because the equipment was not yet ready. The Talgos will be used for three daily Seattle-Portland round trips, with one run extending to Eugene, and for the one Seattle-Vancouver BC round trip. A second Seattle-Van. run will be added in 1999.

Greyhound moved into its new Pasco WA terminal Nov 1. Amtrak was to have moved Nov 17, but didn't. The agent said the delay was caused partially by the holdup in negotiations for vendor lease of a coffee bar, and because of the possibility that the *Empire Builder* may be restructured to split in Pasco.

In RTN 592 we said there apparently was no celebration in San Francisco for the 125th anniversary of the cable car in August. However, Muni and the Cable Car Museum did hold a celebration July 31, at which time newly-built California St. cable car 59 was dedicated and placed in service. The Museum has on sale a commemorative pin for the anniversary.

An auto ferry service is expected to begin on the *Coast Starlight*, possibly as early as July 1999, according to reports.

Northwestern Pacific RR was ordered to shut down as of Nov 27 by the FRA because of safety risks and alleged environmental risks. The FRA said that storm damage has made the tracks too hazardous for train operation, and that 32 of 127 highway crossing signals were broken. The "environmental threat" apparently arises from deterioration of the roadbed along the Eel and Russian Rivers. Millions in FEMA funds to make repairs have been delayed while the railroad's books are being reviewed by what some say are hostile interests within state and federal agencies. The shutdown order will remain until grade crossing signals are repaired, tracks cleared of vegetation, and proper maintenance crews are trained. NWP officials had received no advance warning.

A rumor has been spread that the services on the *Coast Starlight* will be downgraded because the train continues to show a deficit. An Amtrak official denied that the rumor is true, in fact crediting the upgraded services on the train with its growth in popularity and revenues, which are bringing it further out of its deficit by attracting more first-time riders and a repeat business. Amtrak intends to upgrade the train even further, the official said.

(Analysis: The *Starlight* does lose money, but unlike some other long-distance trains it is showing gains. Unfortunately, like the other trains, it is burdened with the RPS accounting system that spreads NE Corridor costs over the entire system. Recent statements by upper-level Amtrak management, admitting the shortcomings of RPS, lend hope that the RPS-generated loss figures for any given train will no longer be the sole measure of financial performance.)

San Diegan 772 was delayed an hour leaving L.A. on Nov 23 after it struck and killed an unidentified trespasser, believed to be a transient. The train had just left LAUS and was southbound along the L.A. River when the accident occurred.

The recent trip of Microsoft head Bill Gates around the West by private train reportedly included 21.3 miles of the D&RGW Cane Creek Branch between Brendel and Seven Mile, Utah, a "rare mileage" run. Comments Miles Post, "Another 14.5 miles and they would have had the entire branch, where the best scenery is. Maybe he's not fully 'cut in' on the proper methods and requirements for 'getting' all of a branch line'".

The Southern California Regional Rail Authority, managers of Metrolink and Amtrak service, announced Nov 11 that it had entered into a 5-year, $80 million contract to operate and dispatch the 128 weekday Metrolink trains over six routes. "Customer service and on-time performance of Metrolink will continue to meet and exceed our customers' expectations with Amtrak continuing to provide the operations and dispatching, said Alex Clifford, Metrolink Board Chairman and Riverside City Council Member.

Scheduled January date for the beginning of service on a fifth *San Joaquin* (Bakersfield-Sacramento) has been postponed from January to February due to major disruption to *San Joaquin* service in January. The ex-Santa Fe line will be shut down for track work in the second half of January, with freights detouring on the ex-SP and Amtrak terminating the *San Joaquins* at Fresno instead of Bakersfield. Buses will connect at Fresno to Southern California points.

The new stop for Stockton on the Bakersfield-Sacramento *San Joaquin* will be at an unstaffed station, using the code SKT (the current Stockton station code is SKN). Track layout prevents the new trains from using the current, staffed Stockton station.

The following message on a flyer is being distributed to passengers by Amtrak on routes that use UP tracks:

"Thank you for making Amtrak a part of your travel plans. As you may know, the Union Pacific Railroad owns all or a significant portion of the tracks over which Amtrak operates the *California Zephyr*, the *Coast Starlight*, the *Sunset Limited* and the *Texas Eagle*. Everyone at Amtrak and Union Pacific understands that you rely on us to operate trains on schedule.

"Over the past year, the Union Pacific has been experiencing congestion due to a lack of capacity on some of its mainline segments. This freight congestion has caused substantial unanticipated delays to Amtrak trains. We are concerned about the effect these delays might have on your itinerary and have been working closely with the Union Pacific to correct this situation.

"Recently, the Union Pacific has made progress in reducing freight congestion on its routes through a series of recovery efforts. Union Pacific has been spending significant capital dollars to increase capacity on their entire system including the routes over which Amtrak operates. To further improve passenger train on-time performance, Amtrak and the Union Pacific have met and agreed to the following measures:

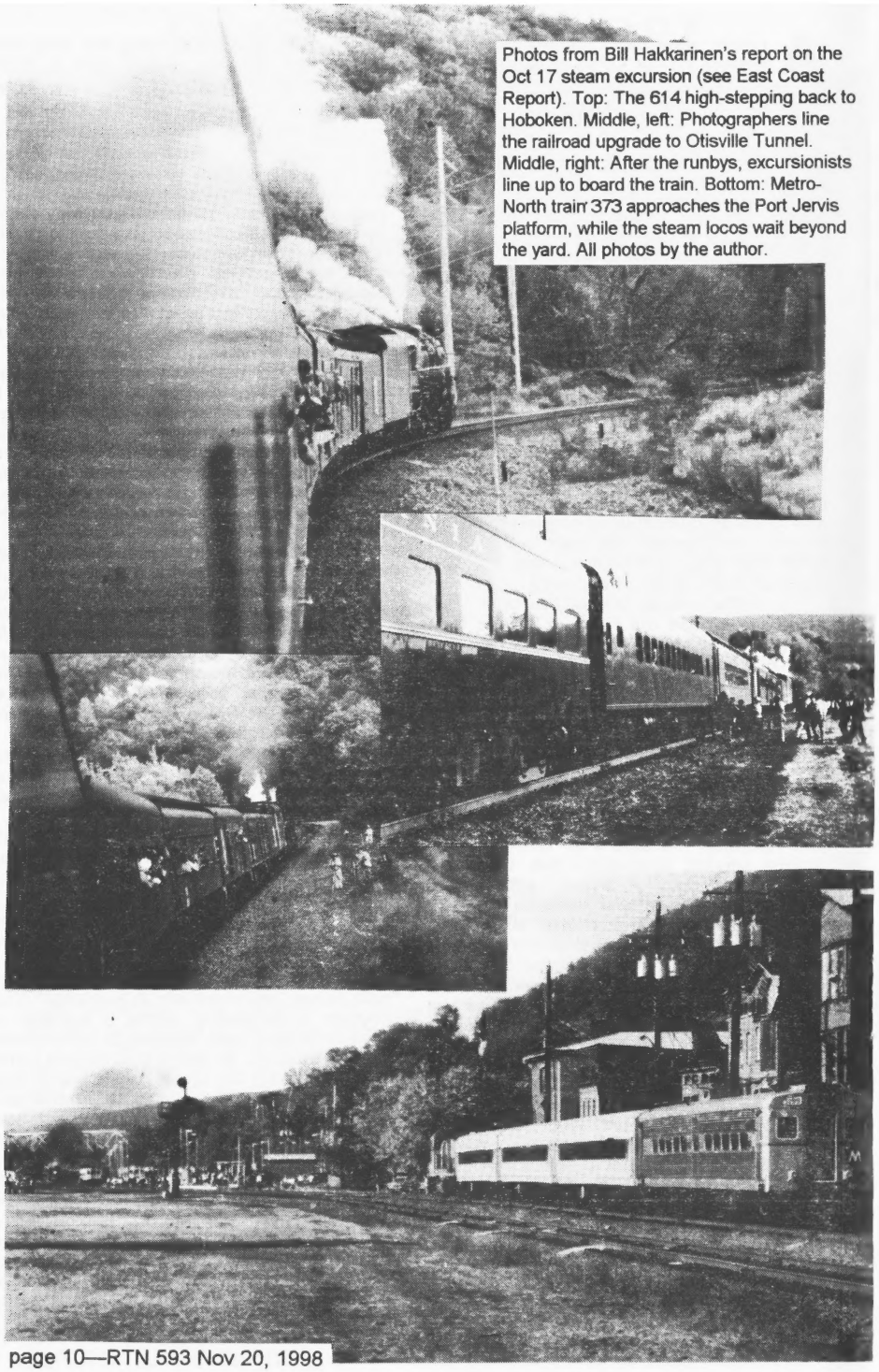
"● Union Pacific dispatchers and operations personnel will have an opportunity to ride the trains to review train performance first-hand.

"● Staff at the Union Pacific network operations center have been assigned specifically to monitor the daily operation of Am-trak services.

"● Amtrak is reviewing schedules to improve reliability along the affected routes.

"Amtrak and the Union Pacific expect to see improvements in passenger train on-time performance. While a number of measures have been initiated to address this problem, please be aware that Amtrak trains operating along the Union Pacific tracks may still incur some delays en route. Amtrak and the Union Pacific Railroad regret any inconvenience these delays may cause and thank you for your patience and cooperation as we work to correct a difficult situation."

Caltrain has received its first rebuilt F40 from the Amtrak Boston MBTA shop. New features are dynamic brakes, no red oscillating nose light, gyra-lite over cab, twin sealed nose beams and ditch lights, platinum mist body, black roof, red & white diagonal stripes on nose.—Dave Jansson.



Photos from Bill Hakkarinen's report on the Oct 17 steam excursion (see East Coast Report). Top: The 614 high-stepping back to Hoboken. Middle, left: Photographers line the railroad upgrade to Otisville Tunnel. Middle, right: After the runbys, excursionists line up to board the train. Bottom: Metro-North train 373 approaches the Port Jervis platform, while the steam locos wait beyond the yard. All photos by the author.

Farewell to Conrail

By John J. Harmon

As Conrail begins to fade gradually into history, it seemed fitting that a final tour of a good part of the system should be made. Bennett Levin, owner of the private car "Pennsylvania 120" and an avid fan of the PRR, proposed to do so, and invited other private-car owners to come along. The trip, to be operated by Buy Miles, a group of private-car owners who negotiate a discounted rate from Amtrak in return for a commitment to operate their cars a certain distance each year, would cover mostly former PRR lines, but some former New York Central and Reading, as well. The train would operate as a four-day Amtrak special, mostly over freight-only lines, and would thus be attractive to mileage collectors.

So it was that on Oct 1 a train consisting of 12 private cars and one Amtrak Viewliner (for overflow riders) was assembled in Amtrak's 30th Street Coach Yard in Philadelphia. Passengers arriving Thursday evening were shuttled from the station in an Amtrak car by the station master's office. One passenger reported that upon asking for the whereabouts of the special train, he was told by the agent "Oh, you mean the Good Riddance to Conrail train".

During the night the train was moved into the station, and last minute arrivals boarded there before 7am. From front to rear, the consist was Amtrak locomotives 109 and 391, private cars Erie-Lackawanna 2, Cimmaron River, Pine Tree State and Caritas, Amtrak Viewliner Harbor View, and private cars Scottish Thistle, Survivor, Chapel Hill, North Star, MKT 403, Silver Spring, Ohio River and Pennsylvania 120.

Our route on Friday will take us south on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor line to Perryville, where we'll head around the wye and up the Port Road, through Enola Yard, across the Rockville Bridge, up the Buffalo line as far as Lock Haven, down the Nittany & Bald Eagle (Conrail has trackage rights) to Tyrone, and thence to Altoona's Rose Yard. This is all ex-Pennsy trackage.

Our departure is held up for a few minutes for a southbound Metroliner to clear the interlocking, but we have a fast run down to Perryville. After we clear the north side of the wye, we stop for a few minutes to resolve a water pressure problem on the Harbor View.

Some of are surprised at how busy and scenic this line is, as we pass three freights on the 60 mile run up to Enola. The line closely parallels the Susquehanna River most of the way. A 20 minute stop is made at Enola for ice and to top off the water in the cars, as there will be no opportunity to take more water until we reach Altoona. As we turn east to cross the Rockville Bridge, the four-car PENNSYLVANIAN comes across on its way to Pittsburgh.

As we head north on new mileage toward Lock Haven, it's interesting to note lines we traveled over 30 years ago while riding Reading's Iron Horse Rambles.

At Sunbury there is a connection with the Shamokin Line to the east, now operated by the Shamokin Valley Railroad. At Milton we see the roadbed of the Catawissa Branch, abandoned many years ago.

We make the connection to the Nittany & Bald Eagle at Lock Haven, and NBE officials come aboard to make sure all goes well. There has been talk of a photo stop somewhere along the line, but this is scrubbed, as a Conrail coal train is behind us. We reach the junction with the main line at Tyrone as the sun is setting, and no one minds that we are delayed for heavy freight traffic, and we finally reach our parking spot at Rose Yard in darkness.

Saturday is Railroad Days in Altoona, and the Railroaders Memorial Museum is opened early especially for us. This is a must see for any visitor to Altoona, as the museum is spread over three floors, and includes lots of multimedia exhibits, including a dynamite introductory piece in the main lobby which introduces visitors to the theme of the museum.

At about 10:30 our train pulls into the Altoona station from Rose Yard for our relatively short trip over to Pittsburgh. It's not possible to make too many trips over Horseshoe Curve. But rare mileage collectors haven't been forgotten, as we operate via track 3 on the north side of the Conemaugh River between SC, west of Johnstown and Conpit, where the Conemaugh Line diverges. This line is used by coal trains and other heavy freights because of its easy grades. Efforts had been made to route our train over this line, but Conrail was insistent that heavy traffic on the single track line would prevent this from happening. As we passed Conpit on the main line, we could hear a maintainer talking a freight about a broken rail, so it became evident that we would have been "detoured" over the main line in any event.

At CP Wing (Wilmerding), we branched left off the main line to the Port Perry Branch, and crossed the Monongahela on a bridge parallel to the Union Railroad. We crossed over the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, and turned right on the "Mon Line" to parallel the latter line around the south side of

(continued on page 22)

Amtrak Brings the *Pennsylvanian* to Chicago

By Gene Poon

Amtrak's new Chicago-Philadelphia *Pennsylvanian* is the result of many hours of study, months of hard work, and some creative juggling of the corporation's limited resources. Particularly for those in the cities between Chicago and Pittsburgh, the new schedule offers a convenient way to take the train, something which this area has not had for decades. RTN contributor Alan Feinstein accompanied me aboard the inaugural run of Amtrak's newest service.

Saturday, November 7, 1998.

It is much too early. At 5:25am, nobody greets us at Chicago Union Station but a lone Amtrak police officer sitting in a golf cart. We're actually a little later than we'd intended to be, since the first cab driver at our hotel refused to take us, instead wanting an airport fare. He convinced the last driver in line to take us to the station instead.

At the South Concourse, a small knot of people huddle together every time one of the doors to the platforms opens and lets in the raw chill. I recognize a few of them; John Chatas, Amtrak's Product Marketing Director, greets me first. Marty Rush, the Product Line Director for the *Pennsylvanian*, strides in and out, supervising arrangements for what is going to be a big day. Soon, Ed Ellis, V.P.-Mail and Express, arrives with his family. I don't recognize him at first, until a broad smile beams out from under his big hat in a friendly greeting.

In a few minutes, Marty Rush is back again to announce that the train is ready. Strolling out beside Track 27, I miss the hubbub that usually envelops Union Station. The quiet is eerie, and our small procession seems to move especially gently so as not to disturb the great station which is still asleep.

Five RoadRailers bring up the rear of the first *Pennsylvanian* out of Chicago. The normally-assigned consist of an Amcafe, Amfleet-II coach and two Horizon coaches is augmented today by a Superliner-II transition sleeper and a Superliner-II cafe-lounge. Two MHC cars splice the passenger cars and our two P42DC engines, which are coupled elephant-style.

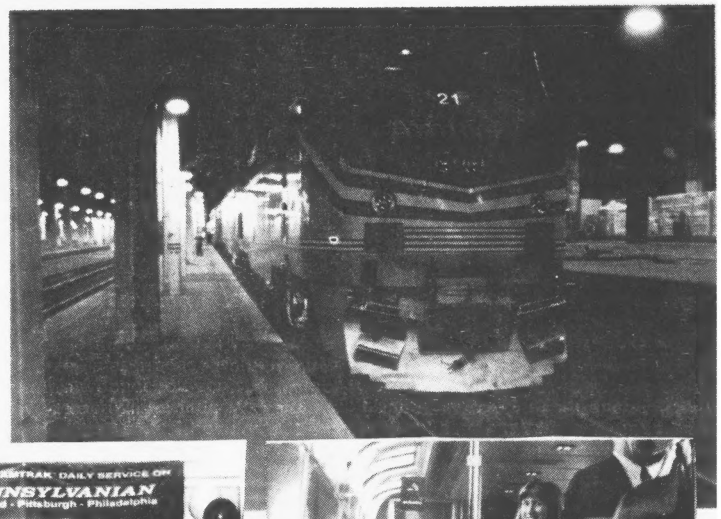
Engine 21 leads the way, as she did on the inaugural of the *Texas Eagle* California service in February. As we walk toward the train, Marty tells us that the equipment is shared with the Chicago-Carbondale *Illini*. For Amtrak Intercity, which has almost no Amfleet-II cars to spare, this saves one set of equipment. The old Philadelphia-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian* used NE Corridor Amfleet cars which have already been reassigned to Keystone service.

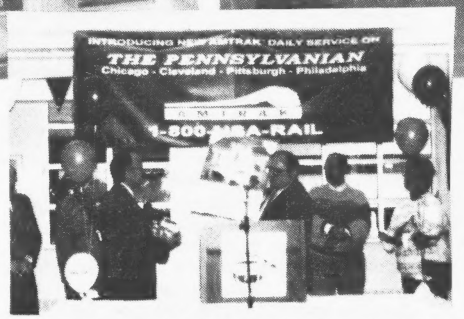
(Above) 2:17am Nov 8 at Philadelphia's 30th St Station. The train board shows the inaugural run from Chicago as having arrived an hour late. But the display for the westbound train 43 erroneously shows the destination as Pittsburgh! The train began running to Chicago the previous morning. All photos by the author.

Revenue passengers are being directed to the Amfleet-II car, while invited guests will be placed in the Horizons. Even though invited by Amtrak, Alan and I both paid for our tickets, which probably confuses the conductor, whose manifest shows seven revenue passengers when there are far fewer in the Amfleet-II car.

Train 44, the *Pennsylvanian*, glides out of Chicago for the first time, on time at 6:00am. In the lounge, Jill Kowal, Chicago service manager, is on the P.A. system to welcome everyone. She's followed by Jerome Dean, a lounge attendant whose usual job is aboard the *Capitol Limited*.

Jerome starts off with an original, soulful Amtrak song, and continues with a narration about the route, a kind of audio route guide which he'll provide for the entire trip. Meanwhile, the upstairs service bar is open. John Long, who normally works the *Crescent*, is busy pouring coffee and serving Mimosas to anyone who doesn't work for Amtrak. Rules about abstaining from alcohol apply to management as they do for the on-duty crew, so coffee, tea and plain orange juice will have to suffice for them. Press representation looks rather sparse; besides us, I spot only Bob Johnston of Trains Magazine. Outside, the sun pierces the early morning gloom as the *Pennsylvanian* glides past Englewood.





(Top) The inaugural *Pennsylvanian*, train 44, at Chicago Union Station on Nov 7, with P42DC engine #21. (Above, left) At Toledo on Nov 7, Amtrak Intercity president Lee Bullock accepts gifts from Rob Greenlese of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority. (Above, right) Ed and Peggy Ellis (center) relax in the lounge car of the inaugural *Pennsylvanian* to the music of folk singer Mark Ross. Ed is Amtrak's VP-mail & express. (Below) Crowds wait to board the first *Pennsylvanian* at Sandusky OH on Nov 7. The city at first was not going to be served by the new train.

It's still rather calm just now, so I sit with Marty Rush and let him talk about his trains, which also include the *Three Rivers* and *Lake Shore Limited*. He has some good ideas for both of them. The eastbound *Lake Shore* has resumed a "supper" service, now that it departs Chicago earlier. "The Bon Voyage party was fine, but it did nothing for the coach passengers," he says. Some menu adjustments are being worked on, with the current steak-and-eggs a question mark, in his mind. Under study is all-night diner service with a limited menu to serve passengers who board at Indiana and Ohio points. Marty also admits that he has received many requests for sleeping car service on the Chicago-Philadelphia-New York *Three Rivers*, and says plans are being

formulated to refurbish the three best Heritage sleepers for use on this train, in a kind of "enhanced Slumbercoach" service. Without a diner, though, the train will keep its current name, leaving "*Broadway Limited*" in the history books.

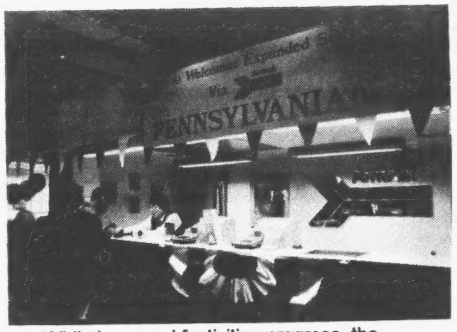
As for the light loadings out of Chicago on this inaugural run of the *Pennsylvanian,* he isn't worried. "This train isn't meant for the end-to-end traffic. We're looking at serving points along the middle part of the route...Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Toledo..." The train's name, by the way, is permanent, as evidenced by the special inaugural posters and the train's new logo. What was reported as an employee contest to rename the train actually was a survey on whether to rename it at all. "*Pennsylvanian*" it shall remain.

With expected express traffic, the *Pennsylvanian* should do well financially. Bill McKnight, of express broker ExpressTrak, is another invited guest, and a lifelong fan of the New York Central, whose ancestral route we ride today as far as Cleveland. In between a railfan's reminiscences, he talks about the express business. In response to a question, he replies, "Ed (Ellis) will have to tell you exactly what we're hauling today, but I know that one RoadRailer is carrying soda." It's an unusual product, one that's usually bottled and distributed locally, but it shows how effective Amtrak's express service can be.

From Jack Davis, Food and Beverage Director for Amtrak Intercity, we learn about the major rebuild project for the Heritage diners, their delivery schedule already decided upon. Equipment for the new kitchens has been ordered; their layout will save enough space to allow the installation of a lunch counter in part of the old kitchen area. In the main dining room, a new booth and seat design will feature fold-up tables, for the crews' ease in cleaning the car, and flip-up seat cushions, for the passengers' ease in getting in and out.

Jack, who comes from the airline industry, favorably compares the corporate culture at Amtrak to the largely dictatorial, down-from-the-top management style at the airlines.

Ed Ellis and others are relaxing in the rear end of the lounge to the music of Mark Ross, a folk singer whose business card identifies him as, among other things, a "bindlestiff and walking anachronism." He later admits to riding both "side-door Pullmans" and Union Pacific's *Butte Special* to his home in Montana. Ed's children, meanwhile, are passing through the car handing out copies of the children's book "The Railroad Toad", which is a story of a toad who goes for a ride on a passenger train, complete with "diner, dome car, lounge and sleeper," although he takes "coach



While inaugural festivities progress, the normal business of the railroad continues, at Toledo on Nov 7.

because it's cheaper." Ed points out that children need to learn about passenger trains and their place in the transportation scene, if passenger rail is to have a future.

The *Pennsylvanian* is well into Indiana by now. Ray Lang of Amtrak Government Affairs, who planned the trip and sent out the all-important invitations, greets guests who board at South Bend, while on the lower level, Marty Rush and the service crew are getting ready for what they expect will be a huge crowd boarding at Toledo. I look around, wanting to chat with Bob Johnston of Trains Magazine for a bit. Sadly, he's gone. A voice from the front of the car tells me that he got off at Hammond.

The train breaks an inaugural banner at Toledo fourteen minutes early. There are people on the platform, and people in the station, awaiting the first eastbound daylight train through Ohio during the Amtrak era. Amtrak Intercity president Lee Bullock and local dignitaries are speaking inside, where a big cake in the waiting room has been served to their many attendees. Ceremonies have to be cut short to allow the unexpectedly punctual train to depart on time, so Lee Bullock hastily receives an award on behalf of Amtrak from the people of Toledo, and the crowd streams out to the waiting train while plates of sandwiches are loaded into the lounge car.

We board a lot of passengers. Every seat in the Horizon cars is taken, and then some. Within minutes, the *Pennsylvanian* leaves town, crossing the Maumee River while Rob Greenlese of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority adds his local knowledge to Jerome Dean's narration. Greenlese points out that Toledo has been lucky; the city has been able to purchase Toledo Union Station and its complex of trackage while all was still intact. A most impressive renovation cost far more than the purchase price, but has given Toledo a fitting gateway for its Amtrak customers. No less significantly, city ownership has allowed Amtrak to establish a major express terminal in Toledo, whose deepwater port is just adjacent to the station property.

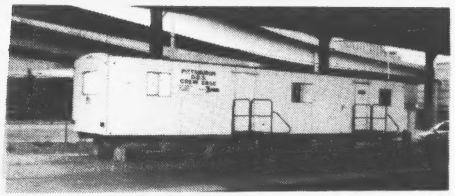
An announcement is made for passengers who boarded at Toledo to visit the lounge for snacks and refreshments. Within minutes, the corridor of the transition sleeper is jammed, and soon the lounge is full. Alan and I seek refuge in the lower level entryway of the sleeper, giving up on trying to get back to our coach. Soon, we're joined by folk singer Mark Ross. There wasn't enough room for him to play his guitar in the crowded lounge.

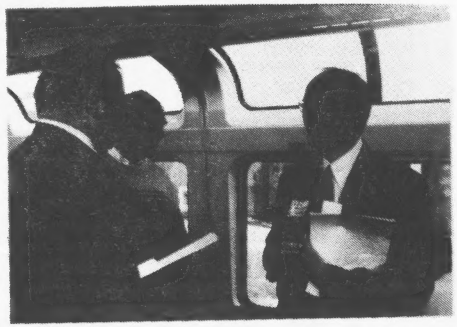
Passengers are, for the most part, riding to the next stop, then taking chartered buses back home. Some have chosen to return home on the westbound *Pennsylvanian,* Train 43, taking advantage of the daylight schedule which almost provides enough time to ride to Cleveland from the west,
attend a baseball game, and return home the same day. With the crowd thinned out a little at Elyria, we go back to the lounge and spend some very pleasant minutes with guests from the communities on the *Pennsylvanian's* route, varying from members of rail advocacy groups such as the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers to one couple, who were invited by a local civic leader because of their participation in a Neighborhood Watch program. These are the real people upon whom Amtrak, or any business, must depend.

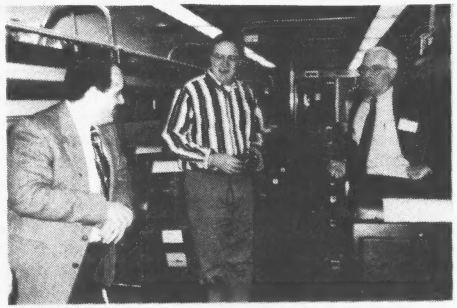
At Cleveland, a high school band celebrates our arrival. The timekeeping has slipped a little, so that festivities in the station are able to reach their scheduled conclusion. At trackside, in the midst of a crowd numbering in the hundreds, local television reporters interview James Betts, chairman of the Ohio State Rail Development Commission. Betts deftly fields the reporters' questions, pointing out the convenience of having a train across Ohio that doesn't have to run in the middle of the night. Meanwhile, Cleveland's light rail cars rattle past, their tracks between the main line and the station, their operators undoubtedly worrying with so many people in the area.

Debbie Hare, Amtrak Intercity's Senior Director-Government & Public Affairs, boards here after the ceremonies in Cleveland. She and Lee Bullock hold a conference with Ohio and Pennsylvania state officials in what is normally the crew lounge of the transition sleeper. On a less exalted level, Donovan Pepper of Amtrak Intercity Government Affairs discusses the Midwest Rail Initiative with a few rail advocates in one of the bedrooms upstairs, until the train lurches, sending a woman out of the aisle and practically into Donovan's lap!

Out of Cleveland, the on-board staff decides to take large trays of sandwiches to the passengers in the coaches, instead of having them come to the lounge all at once. Revenue passengers in the Amfleet cars get their share, too, as they are included when







(Top:) With the advent of the *Pennsylvanian* has also come the new Pittsburgh crew base, which also staffs the *Three Rivers*.
(Middle:) Aboard the inaugural *Pennsylvanian* on Nov 7 are (l to r) Rob Greenlese and Don Yerks of the Toledo/Lucas County Port Authority, and Lee Bullock, Amtrak Intercity President.
(Bottom:) Chatting in the Horizon coach before departure of the inaugural train from Chicago are (l to r) Alan Feinstein, RTN contributor; Martin Rush, Amtrak Product Line Director for the *Pennsylvanian*, *Three Rivers* and *Lake Shore Ltd*; and Bill McKnight, Customer Services Manager, Express Trak.

snacks and desserts are passed around. In the lounge, we get a special treat, a variation on Irish coffee. One Amtrak manager even has a sip before he realizes there's brandy in it. The rest of us enjoy it immensely; it's a big hit, until the crew runs out of brandy.

The portion of the route between Cleveland and Pittsburgh is an ex-Pennsy line which I have never ridden in the

daytime. But today isn't the time to sightsee, as there are just so many people with whom to talk and mingle. Even the assistant conductor gets into the act. He's only been working a few weeks, and admits that he has more to learn about the job and the company than he already knows. But he joins in, lending the working railroader's point of view to the conversation.

The official inaugural ends at Pittsburgh. Bill McKnight is a bit worried that with the train 28 minutes late at Alliance, he might miss an appointment he has planned at Pittsburgh. But despite a Conrail freight that stalls while entering Conway Yard outside the one-time Steel City, the first run of the *Pennsylvanian* from Chicago arrives only seven minutes late. Amtrak's good-bye gift comes from John Long, who gives us each an Amtrak bag with brochures, timetables, and an inaugural poster, key tag and coffee mug, all with the new *Pennsylvanian* logo featuring the names of the cities of Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

It takes extra time to remove the Superliners before Train 44 leaves Pittsburgh, so we run about an hour behind schedule all the way to Philadelphia. Since the *Pennsylvanian* has been running on this new schedule east of Pittsburgh for a couple of weeks already, passenger loadings are good for the rest of the trip. Amtrak has set aside one Horizon coach for the remaining invited guests, for Tom Szachaz, New York service manager, and the onboard service crew returning to their home bases, so we get some much-needed quiet and sleep after a busy day inaugurating Amtrak's newest service. We're not so tired, however, that we miss watching the glow from the headlight of P42 #21 on the upslope embankment of Horseshoe Curve, or the crossing of the Susquehanna River on the famed Rockville Bridge.

We're into Philadelphia an even sixty minutes off schedule at 1:25am. By the time

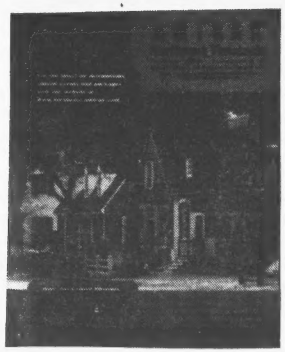
The Collinwood High School band celebrates the arrival of the inaugural *Pennsylvanian* at Cleveland on Nov 7.

I gather up my luggage, camera case and the goodies accumulated from the past eighteen hours, and climb up into 30th St. Station, a passenger is already arguing at the Amtrak service desk that the delay made him miss his Greyhound bus.

It's truly a return to reality. Welcome to the City of Brotherly Love.

CONSIST: Amtrak Train #44/07 NOV, "Pennsylvanian"

21	P42DC
25	P42DC
1550	MHC
1569	MHC
33046	Superliner-II cafe-lounge
39012	Superliner-II transition sleeper
54534	Horizon coach
54550	Horizon coach
25036	Amfleet-II coach
20005	Amcafe
5216/460076	Couplermate/RoadRailer trailer
5525/460103	Bogey unit/RoadRailer trailer
5557/460027	"
5588/460015	"
5568/460122	"
5219	Couplermate



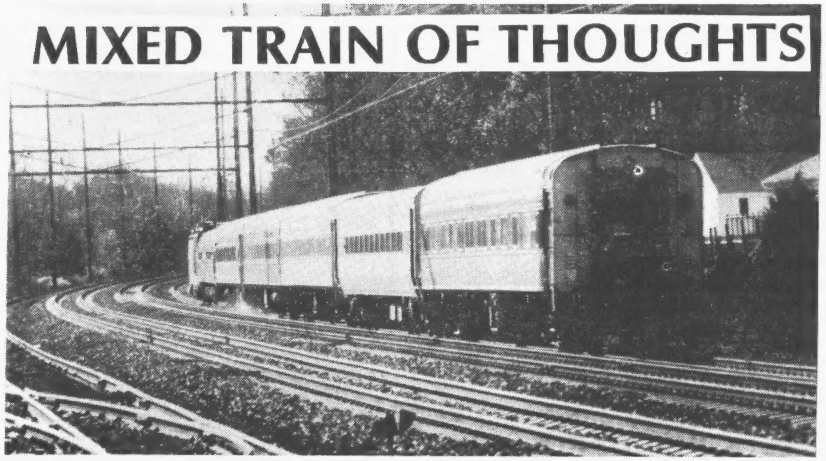
With the Oct 25 change back to Standard Time, Amtrak's fall/winter national timetable (right) and Northeast timetable (left) were published.

The national version comes in a printing of 725,000 and follows the format of previous recent timetables. Its color cover pictures an Amtrak train behind lead engine 28, apparently the *California Zephyr*.

The NE timetable has a press run of 710,000 and pictures on its color cover a scene from the historic area of Colonial Williamsburg VA.

The inside pages of both timetables are printed in black and blue ink.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS



The Thanksgiving holiday rush has already begun on Tuesday, Nov 24. Amtrak train 185 has a consist of Amfleet cafe and five MARC coaches, as seen at Chase MD. Coaches from a number of commuter agencies help Amtrak meet the increased holiday travel demands on the NE Corridor. Photo by Bill Hakkarinen.

Norfolk Southern said on Nov 20 that it has taken the initial legal steps necessary to establish March 1, 1999, as the Conrail transaction "Closing Date" - the date on which NS would begin operating a significant portion of the routes and assets of Conrail.

Norfolk Southern included the following statement with regard to the Conrail transaction:

"NS will begin providing rail freight services on portions of Conrail's route system after the Closing Date. Closing now is expected to occur in the first quarter of 1999. NS personnel are making plans on the basis of a March 1 Closing Date. However, closing continues to be subject to a number of contingencies, including attainment of necessary labor implementing agreements and a determination that all necessary systems are in place and that implementation can be accomplished safely and with a minimum of service disruptions, any one of which might postpone the Closing Date and the realization of benefits NS expects to derive from the transaction."

Norfolk Southern will serve 1,946 new stations after it begins operating a portion of the routes and assets of Conrail. A database listing of those stations and the accounting code numbers identifying them for waybill purposes - officially known as an industry reference file - was released to the Association of American Railroads.

Fort Worth investor Shirlee Gandy has bought the Santa Fe depot and Santa Fe freight station in Fort Worth from Catellus Land Development, the former real estate arm of the Santa Fe. Gandy was quoted as saying that she wants to preserve and restore the station for continued use. Amtrak officials have said informally that they are interested in remaining in the station.

What this means for the often-discussed move to the ex-T&P office building in Fort Worth is unknown. It has been noted that any move to the T&P building would cause more interference to freight operations, since that leg of the Tower 55 interchange leads to UP's Centennial Yard, the busiest such facility in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The former freight building that Gandy purchased is currently vacant.

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Amtrak said in a Nov 16 release that powered by the biggest ridership jump since 1988—4.5%–, its passenger revenue topped the $1 billion level for the first time in its 27-year history, for FY 1998 (Oct 1 to Sep 30). The ridership gain is nearly double last year's mark.

Amtrak board chairman Tommy Thompson said: "Amtrak's record-breaking achievements are further proof that Amtrak has turned the corner to become a more commercially-oriented, customer-focused corporation. These positive results are an incentive for us to redouble our efforts to sustain this momentum. As outlined in our new Strategic Business Plan, we're on the path to creating a more modern and financially sound national rail system."

India suffered a major passenger train accident in the pre-dawn hours of Nov 26. The *Frontier Mail* out of New Delhi derailed about 150 miles northwest of New Delhi, putting seven cars on the ground. Shortly after, the *Sealdah Express*, bound for Calcutta, struck the derailed cars, killing at least 86 people and injuring about 250.

TO OUR READERS:
Our profuse apologies for the long time lapse between recent issues. We suffered a major computer failure while mailing labels for issue 591 were being prepared, and many copies of that issue could not be mailed promptly. Issue 592 could not be mailed at its normal time to all our subscribers, and we could not access our subscribers' accounts for five weeks while our problem was being resolved. As of mid-Nov we were back to normal and are working to resume our regular publication schedule.

Later, the death toll rose to at least 205, with about 260 injured.

The Administration is already working on its FY 2000 budget, NARP said in a Nov 27 message to members. "It will be another tough year for programs like intercity rail outside so-called firewalls. Last year, for Amtrak in FY 2000, the Administration promised $571 million. For high-speed rail, authorized levels for 2000 are $15 million for grade-crossing work and $10 million for planning. Call or E-mail the President quickly and ask for full funding of Amtrak and high-speed rail in 2000."

Amtrak's 1999 calendar features a watercolor by Ted Rose, artist for the 1998 calendar, of the *Texas Eagle* leaving Fort Worth southbound. Amtrak scheduled a press conference for Dec 4 in Fort Worth, at which Amtrak's George Warrington would present Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who was instrumental in saving the train last year, with the original calendar artwork. The conference was postponed, however. The calendar costs $6 each from: Amtrak Calendar, PO Box 7717, Itasca IL 60143.

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Train robbers attacked a passenger train in Mexico's Copper Canyon Nov 11. Using assault weapons, they stopped a train in a tunnel and boarded, terrorizing and robbing passengers for 30 minutes or more. A Swiss tourist, Ernst Schmidt, 68, who had been videotaping from a vestibule door, was shot and killed by the thugs. Three others were injured. Authorities said Schmidt was probably filming scenery and was unaware of the crime in progress. They could not remember a previous passenger train attack, though robberies are common on buses and taxis. The Copper Canyon run was featured on PBS' Great Railway Journeys series shortly before the incident. Police and troops were searching the region thoroughly for the attackers.

DOT Secretary Slater announced in Nov the beginning of a public-private partnership to develop high-speed rail by designating a Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor linking New Orleans with Baton Rouge LA, Houston; Mobile AL, Meridian MS and Birmingham AL. This makes the area eligible for federal funds, to be combined with state and local funds to improve the 470 or so grade crossings in the corridor. This is the first year of a 6-year funding program under the TEA-21 Act. A total of $5.25 million is available for FY 1999, of which the Gulf Coast Corridor should get up to $1 million.

Under its Next Generation High-Speed Rail Program, the FRA is working with the private sector to develop a high-speed non-electric locomotive by 2000, and new satellite-based train control systems and innovative "smart" grade crossing technology.

The UTU Board of Directors Nov 23 voted for unification with the BLE by agreeing to a Statement of Principles while the BLE Advisory Board voted to accept the same Statement of Principles for forming the new union, the "working name" of which will be the North American Rail & Transportation Union (NARTU). Members of the unions must still ratify the change.

NJ Governor Christine Whitman on Nov 6 resigned from the Amtrak Reform Council. Whitman, appointed to the council by Newt Gingrich, was elected its chairman six months ago. Her resignation came after Congress voted a $450,000 budget for the council and prohibited hiring outside consultants (the council had wanted $1.9 million).

Reno NV City Council has okayed an agreement with Union Pacific to depress the ex-SP tracks through Reno. The agreement calls for UP to pay $60 million of the $200 million needed for the project. An increase in local sales tax is expected to fund the city's share.

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The DOT's Office of Inspector General (OIG) on Dec 1 issued an independent assessment of Amtrak's financial needs through FY 2000. The assessment concluded:

- Amtrak's financial condition is reflected accurately in its financial statements and reports and possibly overstates an operating loss by $25 million.
- Amtrak's Strategic Business Plan, revised in Mar 1998, indicated that Amtrak will incur a cash loss for the 1999-2003 period of $2.1 billion. In addition, several financial projections may not be achieved. If they are not, that will increase Amtrak's projected cash loss. If the plan were followed without any modifications, Amtrak could have a cash loss of $535 million in 2003 and a total cash loss for the 1999-2003 period of $2.9 billion.
- Amtrak has sufficient capital resources over the next two years to complete most of its 1998 business plan actions and implementation of high-speed rail service along the NE Corridor. Depending on the level of capital investment needs assumed, anticipated federal funds ($2.2 billion during the plan period) will fail to meet these needs by between $0.5 billion and $1.8 billion for the period 1999-2003. This shortfall emphasizes how critical it is for Amtrak to reduce its operating losses. Every dollar the loss is reduced frees another dollar for capital investment.

The Amtrak Board is aware of the risk and has informed OIG that it has already initiated changes to the Strategic Business Plan that will eliminate at least $390 million of at-risk revenues and cost reductions cited in the assessment.

The Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997 requires OIG to assess Amtrak's 1999 Strategic Business Plan. OIG has taken note of the Amtrak Board's observations, concerns and changes to its Strategic Business Plan and will address their validity during the next phase of OIG's congressional mandate.

(The complete report can be found at www.dot.gov/oig)

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Amtrak's board responded to the adverse OIG report pointing out some shortcomings in the report, and claiming that some expenditures had been overstated and revenues understated.

Some service improvements, which Amtrak says will increase revenue, were mentioned as having been ignored by the USDOT report:

1: Expansion of the Carolinian service.

2: Added capacity (more cars on the existing train) Chicago-Minneapolis.

3. Sleeping cars on the CHI-NYP Three Rivers.

4. Expansion of capacity for Club Class Service.

In addition, Amtrak is admitting that it needs to review its depreciation schedule, and is having the accounting firm Price, Waterhouse perform an audit of the depreciation of its equipment. Amtrak claims that its stated depreciation has been too high in the past, and that the audit should reduce this deficit.

The company has also begun developing a new accounting system to replace its much-criticized Route Profitability System, which in the past has been allotting NE Corridor expenses to the overall national system, to the point where Amtrak West, for example, has had to use a part of its budget for the upkeep and repair of the Northeast Corridor's electric locomotives.

The USDOT report essentially says that it is impossible for Amtrak to determine from RPS how much real bottom-line revenue or deficit a train actually generates.

Amtrak's biggest argument against the USDOT report is that the Inspector General has severely underestimated incremental revenues from the high-speed rail program, expected to begin in 1999. The DOT report questioned Amtrak's projections for revenue and ridership, saying that while the high-speed rail program will generate substantial ridership, this would come from the Metroliner ridership base which the company already has, and that any incremental ridership gain will come on conventional services, not the high-speed trains. Amtrak's claim is that shorter trip times will cause the gain in business for the high-speed trains over conventional trains; and that in markets of 75 miles or less, with no air competition, a larger incremental increase in ridership is expected than the USDOT report states. Also, Amtrak's plan to make upgraded business-class amenities available only on the high-speed trains is expected to direct higher revenues to the higher-fare high-speed services.

Critics of the Amtrak response state that the 75-mile or less market may show increased ridership but at a small increase in incremental revenue; and also that track and signal improvements will also reduce trip times for conventional trains, making the higher fares on the high-speed trains less attractive, especially on these shorter trips.

Amtrak's Statement of Its Year-End Performance

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16 – Powered by the biggest ridership increase since 1988 – 4.5 percent – Amtrak's passenger revenue topped the $1 billion level for the first time in the corporation's 27-year history for Fiscal Year 1998 (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30). The ridership gain is nearly double last year's mark as Amtrak, the nation's passenger railroad, pursues its modernization program and drive toward operating self-sufficiency by the end of 2002.

After Amtrak's Board of Directors reviewed the year-end performance results today, Gov. Tommy Thompson, Board Chairman, said, "Amtrak's record-breaking achievements are further proof that Amtrak has turned the corner to become a more commercially oriented, customer-focused corporation. These positive results are an incentive for us to redouble our efforts to sustain this momentum. As outlined in our new Strategic Business Plan, we're on the path to creating a more modern and financially sound national rail system."

Among some of the other highlights of

Amtrak's excellent results:

* Increased on-time performance four percentage points to 78 percent, nationwide
* Exceeded projected year-end financial results.
* Reduced employee injuries by 14 percent.

Amtrak's system-wide ridership rose 4.5 percent to 21,094,165 in FY98, versus FY97's total of 20,190,450 riders. In the last two fiscal years, ridership is up seven percent overall. As ridership in FY98 rose, so did passenger miles. (A passenger mile is one passenger carried one mile). The FY98 total increased 2.7 percent to 5.3 billion passenger miles.

In addition to record-setting passenger revenue, Amtrak derives additional revenue from other sources, including contract commuter rail operations. Amtrak is now the nation's single-largest provider of contract commuter rail services for state and regional authorities. Operating seven services in six states with more than 54 million customer trips, these commuter services scored an impressive on-time performance of more than 97 percent.

The corporation recently won two new contracts to operate commuter rail services in Southern California. The Metrolink commuter rail service awarded a new five-year, $80 million contract to continue operating and dispatching their trains. In surveys, Metrolink customers routinely gave the service high marks for on-time performance and customer service. And Amtrak also won a two-year, nearly $14 million contract extension to operate Coaster commuter trains. For the past two years, the Coasters have been the top safety performers in all of Amtrak's West Coast operations.

In addition to contract-commuter service, Amtrak is aggressively pursuing other commercial ventures such as mail and express and insourcing to produce additional income for the corporation and is a main component of Amtrak's Strategic Business Plan.

* The corporation's burgeoning mail and express shipment business set a record with $83 million in revenue, a 19-percent increase compared to FY97's $70 million figure.
* Amtrak recently stepped up marketing efforts to win contracts to rebuild rail car equipment, called insourcing. Last month the corporation won a $7-million contract with the Fort Worth (Tex.) Transportation Authority to refurbish commuter rail cars and locomotives.

"We will be more aggressive in all lines of our core business – such as the introduction of high-speed rail in the Northeast next year -- and in related commercial ventures," said George D. Warrington, Amtrak's acting president. "Contract commuter rail operation and rail car and locomotive rebuilding, combined with other commercial initiatives such as mail and express, will improve Amtrak's bottom line even further."

RAIL FANTRIPS

Dec 31-Jan 1: New Year's in New York. Priv car trip on "Dover Harbor" Wash-NYC RT. Bkfst on car 12/31, opt. New Yr reception on car; Southgate Tower Hotel,'return after dinner. $294 up. Wash DC NRHS c/o H. Bielstein, 13425 Reid Cir, Ft Wash. MD 20744.

Jan 7-11, 1999: East Coast Explorer. Atk trains 13 states: MA,RI,CT,NY,NJ,PA,DE,MD, DC,VA,NC,SC,GA,FL. Fly SW Air to Manchester NH. Yankee Clipper, Silver Palm, Meteor. 2 nites hotels. $888/$999. Amer. Ass'n Railroaders, 4351 Holly Hills,St Louis MO 63116

Feb 6-8 or 13-15: Snow Train 1999. From Dearborn or Royal Oaks MI to Sault Ste Marie ON, 2 nites Ramada Inn, Algoma Central Snow Train to Agawa Canyon, dinner Bavarian Inn of Frankenmuth. Opt. 1st Cl. $305 up. BluewaterNRHS,Box296,Royal Oak MI 48068

Feb 12-21: Great American Snowtrain. Over 5000 mis RT Atk to Montana, visit Mall of the Americas, Mpls; Isaac Walton Inn, Essex MT. $950 up. Mystic Valley Railway Society Inc, Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0009. Phone 24 hrs 617-361-4445.

Mar 26-28: Cherry Blossom Special, Atk NEC to Wash DC, 1st cl or coach on Twilight Shoreliner. See attractions, monuments, museums, Japanese cherry trees. Mystic Valley Railway Society, Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0009. Call 617-361-4445. $300 up.

Apr 16-25: Chicago Special. Over 2000 miles Lake Shore Ltd to Chicago. 7 nites at same in-town hotel. Explore Loop, museums RR attractions, waterways. $1400 up. Mystic Valley Railway Society, Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0009. Call 617-361-4445.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 or rtn@trainweb.com

SOUTHERN RAILWAY DEPOTS, Volume 2. 58 depots in 7 states. 64 pages, 85 previously unpublished full color photos. $19.95 postpaid. NC residents add 6% tax. Ralph Ward, 816 Oakmont Drive, Asheboro NC 27203-4236.

Organizers of the 1999 NRHS/R&LHS National Convention, to take place in Sacramento CA June 21-26, announced in early November that plans are completed for the operation of special excursion trains during the convention. The dates of the runs are as follows:

Tues, Jun 22: Special Amtrak train Sacramento-Richmond and return via ex-WP tracks to Stockton, then BNSF via Franklin Canyon to Richmond.

Wed, Jun 23: UP steam loco 844 will handle special UP train Sacramento to Tehama and return via Marysville and Chico.

Thur, Jun 24: Amtrak special Sacramento to Oakland via Martinez, and ferry to San Francisco with time for cable car and streetcar riding. Return by ex-WP via Altamont Pass and Niles Canyon.

Fri, Jun 25: All-day seminars on railroading and time to visit Calif. State RR Museum and Railfair.

Sat, Jun 26: Special UP train Sacramento-Keddie and return via Feather River Canyon. UP steam loco 3985 will be used.

Trips on the Yolo Shore Line (former Sacramento Northern tracks) are also planned, as well as an already-announced McCloud River RR trip Tues, Jun 22, using steam engines 18 and 25.

Convention registrants will have first call on reservations, which are strictly first-come, first-served. Registration and convention details can be obtained by writing NRHS/R&LHS Convention, PO Box 8289, San Jose CA 95155-8289. The pre-registration period ends on Jan 31, 1999.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Safety Rule of the Issue. There you are on the platform, in the morning, waiting for the train—a day like any other. You place your briefcase down for a moment to take a gander at your newspaper's top headlines, when you read something so shocking (Dare we give a recent example?) that you literally have a knee-jerk reaction and accidentally kick your briefcase onto the tracks. (It could happen.)

"What to do? No, no—panicking is not one of your choices. And, neither is trying to retrieve it from the tracks. Never, never try to retrieve anything you may have inadvertently dropped onto the train tracks. What you need to do is notify the station ticket agent or Grand Central Terminal Station Master, and he or she will help you get your item(s). If you drop an item from a train, notify the conductor immediately."

—From Metro-North's customer publication "Mileposts", October issue.

"...Consultants and transit officials are to begin a year-long federally funded study of transit users in January, to come up with productive travel improvements along the agency's (AC Transit's) busiest corridors.

"'This is not a light rail study,' said Jaime Levin, Marketing Communications Manager for AC Transit. '...We don't necessarily have a desire to build a light rail system, but we want to get a better idea of what we could do to improve.'

"'We are not reinventing the wheel,' [AC Transit Project Manager Aena] Prakash said."

—Berkeley (CA) Voice, Nov 26.

(Just tell us what *are* you going to study?)

CARS & CONSISTS

"Pennsylvanian, train 43, Sandusky OH Nov 15: engines 88 & 54 (P42); cars 1569 MHC, 1720 bag, 43027 cafe, coaches 25055, 54004 & 54512, Roadrailers 410002, 460185, 460115, 460009, 460068, 460049, 460212, 460087 & 460113. Same Nov 20: engines 47 (P42) & 802 (P40); cars 1410 & 1532 MHCs, 20005 cafe, coaches 25089, 54550 & 54534.

"Capitol Limited, train 30, Toledo OH Nov 19 (2:50am): engines 25 & 13 (P42); cars 1166 bag, Superliners 39022 transition dorm-slpr, coaches 34054 & 34038, smoking coach 31541, lounge 33025, diner 38062, slprs 32071 & 32069, MHCs 1537, 1518, 1523, 1517 & 1538, express cars 71163, 71074, 71049, 71089 & 71104.

"Lake Shore Limited, train 49, Sandusky OH Oct 25: engines 87 & 65 (P42); cars 1728 bag, 2440 "Pacific Beach" crew slpr, Viewliner slprs 62044 "Sylvan View" & 62020 "Moonlight View", diner 8556, lounge 28005 "Chicago Club" (new NEDirect-type paint), coaches 25035, 25073, 25009, 25121 & 25025, Viewliner sleeper "Mystic View", bag 1180, MHCs 1427 & 1520, Railroaders 460021 & 460229. (Train arrived 20 mins late in spite of having an extra hour to travel because of change back to Standard Time. Sandusky depot and express bldg have new roofs and work was progressing on main depot interior remodeling.)—George Danchisen.

Farewell to Conrail (continued from page 11)

Pittsburgh, passing the Panhandle Bridge, now used by trolleys, and Gateway Center, the former P&LE depot, on the way. We then crossed over the Ohio River at Island Avenue and went west as far as Bell, where we reversed direction and had a switcher pull us back into Pennsylvania station, where we would remain for the night.

There was plenty of time to see the sights, and many went for rides on the trolley network, and found good restaurants in town. Rain dampened the festivities somewhat, but everyone reported an enjoyable afternoon and evening.

We have an early departure Sunday for the first non-PRR mileage of the trip. We follow the THREE RIVERS route as far as New Castle Jct at CP75, and find #40 waiting for us to clear as we enter Conrail's Ashtabula Line. This is new mileage for all but a few, and we remain on ex-PRR as far as Youngstown, where we diverge to ex-NYC track up to Ashtabula. In scheduling the trip, Conrail said we needed to allow six hours for the trip from Rochester to Ashtabula, due to heavy freight traffic. But only one train is seen on the line today, and he is tucked away in a siding as we come north. The 97-mile trip is made in three hours, and we merge into Conrail's Chicago line, stopping only briefly for a crew change.

Due to our early arrival, an attempt is made to convince local Conrail officials to make a side trip around the Buffalo Belt to Niagara Falls, but this is denied, possibly because two football specials are in town for a Bills game, and they must be serviced at Niagara Falls, along with the normal Sunday train which leaves there at 2:30.

We were scheduled to lay up in the Stock Yard, opposite the former Central Terminal, but a circus train is in town occupying our track, so we'll be diverted to Seneca Yard, a former PRR facility about three miles south. First we have to get the train turned around, so we pull up on the main line between Central Terminal and the Stock Yard, back down to Babcock Street Yard, and pull down past the draw bridge to Seneca Yard, covering about one mile of ex-Lehigh Valley track on the way.

Our location is somewhat remote but the sun is good, and Conrail's main line is close by, and an overbridge is accessible, so most find something to do until sunset.

Monday promises to be a long day, as we have to cover some 430 miles of freight-only track, including the entire Buffalo -Harrisburg line, and the ex-Reading from Harrisburg to Philadelphia.

We start at 6am by crossing above the Chicago line to Ebenezer Jct on the Buffalo line, where we pick up the route of the Buffalo Day Express. This train used to back out of Central Terminal to a point called CP49A (now gone), and proceed south to Ebenezer Jct. It doesn't start to get light until we are south of Ebenezer Jct., but we are treated to a fine view of the setting full moon. There is a light frost, and we see our first significant fall foliage of the trip.

This line is very scenic, and we follow the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River system. We travel at the track speed of 40mph, and our progress is interrupted only by a crew change at the Sportsman's Hotel in Renovo. At Renovo, the EL2 is taken off by a North Shore Railroad switcher, to be used on an excursion on the former Lackawanna line next weekend.

Despite a wait at Rockville for a late running THREE RIVERS, we arrive at Harrisburg before 4pm, and it becomes obvious we will be taking the ex-Reading back to Philadelphia. There was always a chance that Conrail would opt to run us via Amtrak's Lancaster Line if traffic was heavy. The routing means that we'll have to get into 30th Street Station via the High Line behind the station.

Our progress is a steady 50mph on the former Reading, and we are amazed that we reach the High Line in daylight--something we thought virtually impossible earlier in the day.

The High Line has seen somewhat infrequent use in recent years, but traffic will soon surge, as CSX is building a connector from their Philadelphia line to connect with the southern end of the High Line in South Philadelphia. They'll use this line to get traffic off their River Line on the east side of the Schyulkill River to the Trenton Line. Philadelphia officials would like to see them abandon their line along the river so they can turn it into a park, but this is unlikely to happen in the near future, as CSX still needs it to access their yard in South Philadelphia.

The connection from the Reading into 30th Street was removed by Amtrak a couple of years ago in an effort to simplify the interlocking plant. So we have no choice but to head south from the wye at West End to the junction with the Amtrak main line at Phil. We then back into 30th Street Station nearly two hours early, and the trip is over.

All are agreed that the trip was a great success, in spite of a couple of scheduling problems. Look for more Buy Miles excursions in 1999.

STATUS OF MEXICAN PASSENGER TRAINS

As of October. Format of table: Line 1: End point cities of passenger service. Line 2: Train nos; normal number of cars in consist; frequency of operation. Line 3 and ff: Status of service. "No road" means there is no road to these points and thus no substitute bus service is possible.

> Mexico - Nuevo Laredo
1-2; 3; Tri-weekly
Cut back to San Luis Potosi - Saltillo only (no road)

> Mexico - Juarez
13-14; 3; Daily
Cut back to Aguascalientes - Torreon (no road).

> Tampico - Monterrey
171-172; 1; Tri-weekly
To be cut back to Ciudad Victoria - Tampico 11/98 (no road).

> Saltillo - Piedras Negras
181-182; 3; Tri-weekly
Politics may keep this train running.

> Mexico - Veracruz via Orizaba
51-52; 2/3; Daily
Politics should keep this train running.

> Mexico - Veracruz via Orizaba
53-54; 4/5; Daily
Scheduled to be withdrawn 1/99, but politics may keep it going.

> Mexico - Oaxaca
111-112; 2; Daily
Scheduled to be withdrawn 1/99, but politics may keep it going.

> Veracruz - Tapachula
102-102; 2; Daily
Still being studied, but there is no good road access. May be split into two sections in 2/99 (not sure what this means).

> Cordoba - Merida
49-50; 1/2; Daily
Still being studied, but there is no good road access. Scheduled to be cut back to Coatzacoalcos - Campeche 1/99.

> Puebla - Oaxaca
107-108; 2; Daily
Should keep running (No road access).

> Apizaco - Hueyotlipan
115-126; 2; 3 trains daily
Expected to be withdrawn 10/98, but politics may keep it running.

> Hidalgo - Tapachula
221/222 Mixto; 1; Daily
Still being studied, but no road access.

> Coatzacoalcos - Salina Cruz
223/224 Mixto; 1/2; Daily
Withdrawn 7/23/98

> Campeche - Coatzacoalcos
303-304 Mixto; 1/2; Daily
Withdrawn 7/23/98

> Merida - Campeche
305-306 Mixto; 1; Daily
Withdrawn 7/23/98

> Merida - Tizimin
307-308 Mixto; 1; Daily
Still being studied; politics an issue.

> Merida - Valladolid
361-362 Mixto; 1; Daily
Still being studied, but scheduled for withdrawal 12/98.

> Merida - Peto
363-364 Mixto; 1; Daily
Scheduled for withdrawal 10/98.

> Merida - Sotuta
365-366 Mixto; 1; Daily
Withdrawn 7/23/98

> Mexico - Veracruz via Jalapa
101-102; 1; Tri-weekly
Scheduled to be withdrawn 11/98, but politics could intervene.

> Chihuahua - Los Mochis
73-74; 6; Daily
Concessioned 2/18/98.

> Chihuahua - Los Mochis
75-76; 7; Tri-weekly
Concessioned 2/28/98

The following trains all have been "temporarily suspended":

> Mexico - Lazaro Cardenas
31-32; 3; Tri-weekly

> San Luis Potosi - Tampico
137-138 Mixto; 3; Tri-weekly

> Durango - Felipe Pescador
17-24; 2; Daily

> Durango - Torreon
87-88 Mixto; 1; Daily

> Monterrey - Torreon
175-176; 1; Daily

> Mexico - Beristain
61-62; 2; Daily

> Durango - Tepehuanes
321-322 Mixto; 1; Tri-weekly

> Durango - Regocijo
325-326 Mixto; 1; Twice weekly

> El Rey - Quimica
370-371 Mixto; 1; Daily

> Quimica - Escalon
387-388 Mixto; 1; Daily

> Frontera - Sierra Mojada
389-390 Mixto; 2; Daily
"Temporarily" suspended; could be reinstated (no roads).

> Mexico - Guadalajara
5-6; 4; Daily

> Guadalajara - Benjamin Hill
3-4; 5; Daily

> Benjamin Hill - Nogales
3-4; 2; Daily

> Benjamin Hill - Mexicali
3-4; 3; Daily